

Democratic Energy Policy and the Possibility of Mini-publics

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By the accidents of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power generation in 2011, it reveals so many problems, for example, energy policy is one of the public policies but it has been decided by bureaucracy and specialists mainly not including public opinion. Now, we are required to choose appropriate directions of the energy policy for the future from the point of view of safety or sustainability and so on. In modern society, the problem has become high grade and complex, so we can't choose solutions easily. In recent years, Mini-publics¹ as a practical method in "deliberative democracy"² are expected to resolve these problems in a procedural process. The mechanism of mini-publics is able to take public opinion into the policy-making process as a useful reference because it adopts random-sampling to make a microcosm to reflect society, so if the microcosm can reflect our society correctly, the discussion results from the microcosm have legitimacy in terms of taking it to the policy-making process. The form of mini-publics has two sides, one is "deliberation with other people" and the other is "deliberation in mind". So, I think mini-publics have potential to understand and resolve energy problems in a democratic method. It has been implemented in many countries and advanced prior research. In this paper, I introduced some representative methods in mini-publics and examples of deliberated results about energy problems. In previous research, some merits and demerits in mini-publics were clarified, but it doesn't make clear and lacks discussion about some fundamental issues in mini-publics, so then, I focused on "representativeness issues". This is indicated by a low response rate especially in young people when mini-publics were implemented in Japan. I assume this issue is related to the fact that young people have less social concern compared to other generations. Why do young people tend not to have social concern in modern society in Japan? I think there are two reasons. One is that the mind of young people may change from social-oriented to individualism due to rapidly changing social structure. I define it as "subject requirement". The other is that people have no time to join mini-publics due to working or childcare and so on. I also define it as "social requirement". It needs to prepare both requirements to promote mini-publics in Japan for making public policy supported by highly public opinion.

As a result, I find that young people tend not to have social concern, definitely, by viewing the voting rate data changing over the year and public opinion-poll about public concern. And, from surveying 'young people's argument after the war' and 'transition of education', I found a formed "abundant social" by early economic growth after the war gave some effort to the situation in education and employment. And more, it had also become a competitive society and globalization. These events cause isolation of young people from our society and they had become apathetic toward our society. About actual conditions of "social requirement" in Japan, I found Japan tends to have long working hours and especially low level of getting paid vacations compared to other countries. It is caused by looseness of law regulation and related to their working atmosphere, so it needs to comply with law regulation more, grow some ability to manage their working efficiently and improve their working atmosphere to create time for joining mini-publics. Furthermore, I focus on the people who have difficulty joining mini-publics like a physically handicapped person because I think it needs to keep equality to join mini-publics for all people.

For decision making supported by highly public opinion through promoting mini-publics in Japan, it needs to "establish democratic members in society" through an educational approach and "improve employment conditions" through complying with law regulation and so on. To prepare these conditions is essential for promoting mini-publics. On this preparation, we can offer accurate solutions for many social issues like energy policy by promoting "deliberation" with other people and "well-thought-out" in individuals through using mini-publics efficiently. Eventually, we can keep democratic society itself.

¹ 「The examination about principle and policy on civil democratic society」

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<http://lex.juris.hokudai.ac.jp/csdemocracy/ronkou/tamura091110.html>, accessed November 15, 2013

² Shinohara Hazime, eds., *The civil politics-What's deliberative democracy*, 872 (Iwanami company, 2004)